



Lifelong Access Libraries patrons in (clockwise) Louisville Free Public Library (KY), Multnomah County Central Library (OR), Louisville Free Public Library (KY), New Haven Free Public Library (CT)

## At a Glance

# Lifelong Access Libraries™

## An Aging Opportunity

Our nation is facing an explosion in the number of adults 55 and older who, in contrast to earlier generations, are healthier, more active, and more committed to ongoing community engagement. Research on adults who have reached the age of retirement indicates that the retirement years are enhanced when there are multiple social and civic connections, ongoing learning, and opportunities for making meaningful contributions to the larger society.

## An Initiative for Change

Libraries are uniquely placed to help mediate the great social transformation signaled by the growing proportion of healthy, active older Americans. Accordingly, LFF is conducting a national four-year initiative—Lifelong Access Libraries—designed to transform libraries as centers for lifelong learning and civic engagement. The initiative builds on LFF's work to foster new thinking about aging in the library field and to build connections between librarians and peers in other fields undergoing transformation. Lifelong Access Libraries is funded by a grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies (USA), with additional support from local funders.

“Libraries have the potential to make the process of re-imagining, re-visioning, and raising consciousness possible. People need to rethink what they can become.”

Mary Catherine Bateson, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and English at George Mason University; President, Institute for Intercultural Studies in New York

### Lifelong Access Libraries Offer:

- **Advisory Councils** to ensure peer planning and program development
- Lifelong **learning activities** for new careers and enrichment
- **Spaces and programs** that promote social and intergenerational connections
- Community **forums and conversations** to promote civic and social engagement
- **Life planning** information and services
- Referrals to and information about **opportunities for community service**
- **Expanded collections**, including electronic resources, to support learning and productive aging
- **Health and fitness** information and programs
- Training in computers and **information literacy**

## Strategies for Change

The Lifelong Access initiative is designed to help the library community reshape its concepts and practices for services to active older adults. It also seeks to make connections between librarians and peers in other fields undergoing transformation in response to the baby-boomer generation. The initiative's main strategies are to:

**Build leadership** by convening library leaders and engaging them in an ongoing dialogue about institutional change in services for older adults.

**Provide training** in the Lifelong Access service model. Librarians in six states will be trained as part of LFF's professional development program.

**Enhance career development** through annual intensive weeklong Lifelong Access Libraries Institutes offered to mid-career librarians. These Institute Fellows will demonstrate and promote new approaches to services for active older adults at their home libraries and in their communities.

**Showcase model development** through Centers of Excellence and Innovation that will demonstrate new practices, programs, and partnerships to foster productive aging.

**Create a community of practice** through a Lifelong Access Libraries Online Collaborative Network and Clearinghouse that will enable practitioners to share information and approaches for helping older adults realize their goals for individual and civic renewal ([www.lifelonglibraries.org](http://www.lifelonglibraries.org)).



LIFELONG ACCESS LIBRARIANS enjoy a vibrant community of practice.

### Lifelong Access Centers of Excellence and Innovation

**Allegheny County (PA) Library Association**, with 44 member libraries, is developing programs and services to expand the civic and educational options for older adults, who make up 20% of the population in greater Pittsburgh. New programs include the **One Book, One Community** program and **Lifelinks for Family Caregivers**.

**New Haven (CT) Free Public Library** initiated work with active older adults through an outreach project involving volunteers and a series of Community Conversations on the needs and interests of older adults. These activities led to the formation of the **50+ Transitions Center**, offering programs on work, service, and retirement.

**Phoenix (AZ) Public Library** has made services for active older adults a strategic planning priority, responding to the large number of baby boomers resident in Phoenix. The library assigned two librarians to attend Lifelong Access training. They are conducting focus groups across greater Phoenix and overseeing additional research that will enable them to make recommendations for re-designed services for the entire 14-branch system.

### Lifelong Access Libraries Online

[www.lifelonglibraries.org](http://www.lifelonglibraries.org)

The Lifelong Access Libraries website features:

- An **inventory** of innovative library programs and services for older adults
- **Resource lists** compiled to assist librarians working with active older adults
- **News and information** on Lifelong Access activities, trainings, and events
- A **weekly blog** aimed at encouraging discussion and providing up-to-date aging resources:  
<http://lifelonglibraries.wordpress.com>